

Dewey Brown: Where I was at at King's Creek. I was working at King's Creek. They start the organizing.

Female: That's over the *[Inaudible]*.

Dewey Brown: And we signed up men, men and children, boys and girls, boys *[Inaudible]* papers up there to get chartered. We signed up everybody we could get ahold of.

Interviewer: That's what I thought. Now what was the year that that happened?

Dewey Brown: 1933, '32.

Interviewer: They passed a law, they passed a law that said you could organize.

Dewey Brown: Yeah. That's when Franklin Delano Roosevelt came in and he gave the right to organize.

Interviewer: So it was pretty easy after that?

Dewey Brown: Well, it's pretty easy some places. Some places aren't as easy.

Interviewer: Some places still aren't organized.

Dewey Brown: Yeah. I know places around here now that's not organized and they're scabbing. But we didn't have too much trouble up there when we first started. The main boss said now when you sign that paper you ain't got no job, Hampton.

Interviewer: Did that scare off some guys?

Dewey Brown: No. He never scared us off. And he said we wouldn't have no job. I said, now, Mr. Hampton after we get this paper signed we're a chartered union. Three weeks after the guys signed he was gone.

Interviewer: Who was Mr. Hampton.

Dewey Brown: He's the boss.

Interviewer: Oh I'm sorry. Do you want me to put out the *[Inaudible]*

Female: That's all right. See I got see about it.

Interviewer: Ok. If it bothers you over there tell me.

Female: No. That's ok.

Interviewer: Mr. Hampton was the boss there?

Dewey Brown: Yeah. He was the mine foreman.

Interviewer: He was what?

Dewey Brown: Mine foreman.

Interviewer: Foreman. Yeah.

Dewey Brown: Yeah. Me and Randal Cornick was working together. I signed it one time and Randal signed it, two person sign it on the paper to get the charter. And then we took it all around the country over there, the country, wasn't no camp, just country. Went around to everybody's house and got them to sign it. Never had no trouble signing them up. So but in Hoover's day it was hard to get ahold of a dollar. Sometimes people could have made good money and did make good money but they didn't make none of it.

Interviewer: But it was - So you actually did organizing? You actually took it around and signed people up.

Dewey Brown: Yeah.

Interviewer: What were the meetings like when you signed them up? You just called people together?

Dewey Brown: We went to their house.

Interviewer: Went to their houses.

Dewey Brown: Went to the houses.

Interviewer: You didn't have to do that in secret did you?

Dewey Brown: No. We didn't do it in secret 'cause we had the law behind us. Now there were places they did have to do it in secret but we didn't. When we got enough together to have a meeting why we just went in somebody's house or some place like that and had a meeting. Not that our strategy or _____. First thing you know we have everybody on King's Creek, Line Fork, Drive Fork, Camp Banks and all of them signed it. And then Rufus Mueller come up there on the 12th day of July 1933 and give us obligation and charter. We didn't have too much trouble I didn't know. Because they know we were coming in so they kind of went along with it.

Interviewer: So –

Dewey Brown: Had one man up there by the name of Ethan. And fired the powerhouse. That powerhouse fired him. And he said he wouldn't come out, wouldn't join. He went over one night in these bars and said he looked up the road and seen the lights coming down the road and looked down the road and seen the lights coming up the road. And he looked up the holler where the boarding house was and said he seen them coming that way. Said I figured it's time to go across.

Interviewer: Time to what?

Dewey Brown: To pull the car out of the powerhouse. I reckon he left. Never did come back. Did he?

Female: [Inaudible]

Interviewer: And that's 'cause he wouldn't join the union.

Dewey Brown: He didn't want to. But if stayed there he had to and he left.

Interviewer: What did they call guys who did that? Did they have a name they called guys who did like that?

Dewey Brown: Call what?

Interviewer: Did they have a name that they called guys that wouldn't join up in the union.

Dewey Brown: We called them scabs.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Dewey Brown: That's what I still call them.

Interviewer: They made it pretty hard on them.

Dewey Brown: Well, we just didn't want them.

Interviewer: I guess you all had to stick together at that point.

Dewey Brown: That's what union is for is stick together.

Interviewer: That's what I figured.

Dewey Brown: We had a whole lot of scabs in the country. And I guess a whole lot of them would have scabbed if they could have. But the union was so strong at that time they didn't. Now four or five years the union got weaker because old miners had already got pulled out of the mine. And young generation don't think the depression is what it was. You can tell them about it and no, it don't make no difference.

Interviewer: They just don't remember the depression.

Dewey Brown: Nobody made a dollar a day.

Interviewer: That's really bad.

Dewey Brown: And I laid coal in King's Creek for 60 cents a day.

Interviewer: Lawrence.

Dewey Brown: Lawrence.

Female: Where's your home at?

Interviewer: I live in Charleston, West Virginia. So really the depression that made the union come in here.

Dewey Brown: The depression is what got people in the notion of joining because they couldn't make it no worse.

Interviewer: Before the depression were guys wanting to join the union?

Dewey Brown: They was in the 1920s. They brought the union in here but it didn't do any good.

Interviewer: Not much was organized back in the 20s.

Dewey Brown: Didn't carry it out well.

Female: Over in Harlan they could tell you a lot.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. I've been down in Harlan talking to some people. Pretty rough.

Female: Mm-hmm. They got _____ the governing.

Interviewer: How did they do it wrong?

Dewey Brown: Huh?

Interviewer: How was it that they did it wrong in the '20s?

Dewey Brown: What?

Interviewer: You said that when they came in trying to organize the union in the '20s that they did it wrong.

Dewey Brown: Well, they just didn't follow it up. I mean the organizers didn't on strong, didn't come on strong because that was just shortly after World War I. And they was getting pretty good wages but they tried to organize. And then I worked in King's Creek for 20 cents a ton load coal, 20 cents a ton.

Interviewer: 20 cents a ton.

Dewey Brown: And loading it by hand. You didn't get to use a shovel. You had to pick it up by hand and load it in cars. And they started work there – when I started work there I started work for \$1.50 a day on the outside on the tipper. Then I went inside to load coal.

Interviewer: When was it that you went into the mines?

Dewey Brown: I went in in '32 up there. Now I'd been working in mines before that when we were married. We were married in '31.

Interviewer: That's a long time.

Dewey Brown: This November's been 30 years.

Interviewer: Yeah. My parents haven't been married that long. And they got married in '48 I think it was. I'm going to have to learn how to roll my own cigarettes. It's a lot cheaper to do it that way.

Dewey Brown: Yeah. And it's a lot better for you too.

Interviewer: Yeah? Why is it that – I take it that not too many mines are union anymore.

Dewey Brown: Well, we ain't got the one mine in Lincoln County that's union.

Interviewer: Oh so that's steel mine.

Dewey Brown: And then Marlow. I went to Marlow and worked for 23 years and 5 months.

Interviewer: How was it that all the mines went non-union?

Dewey Brown: Well, as I told you the old miners died out, quit or retired. Huh?

[Outside conversation]

Dewey Brown: In Marlow they just terminated the contract. Didn't do anything wrong but when they terminated the contract I quit.

Interviewer: When they terminated the contract you quit then.

Dewey Brown: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did the wages go down then?

Dewey Brown: Yeah, they cut wages. When it got de-unionized they cut the wages first thing you know. That's what they do.

Interviewer: When was that that they went nonunion in the mine?

Dewey Brown: '64.

Interviewer: '64. That's right. There were a lot of roving pickets then weren't there?

Dewey Brown: Yeah.

Interviewer: Were you in it?

Dewey Brown: Went on a few. People turning cars over.

Interviewer: You want to put this up near you because I'm afraid – you're talking kind of soft.

Dewey Brown: Turn the trucks over and dump them out on the road and dump it out on the ramp. Seen a few of them run.

Interviewer: How come – did the union give you support? Did they send you food and stuff like that when you were out on pickets?

Dewey Brown: No.

Female: Just on our own.

Dewey Brown: We were on our own. We knowed that if we were working the mines they turned, they went nonunion we'd just be drove around like slaves like they do them now. Same place I worked over there now it's nonunion and they got a lot of men over there and just drive them around like dogs. I've got a son in law working over there. And Willie Dixon he started work with me. He said he wouldn't let one of the young ones come in to start scabbing. And they did run his son in law because he did scab work.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Dewey Brown: Told him to get out and get going. He had no use for him whatever.

Interviewer: Do you think there's any chance they're going to unionize these mines again in the future?

Dewey Brown: I doubt it because young generation of people don't believe that we ever had to work for 15 – 20 cents a ton. You can tell them about it until you get blue in the face and they still don't believe you.

Interviewer: They can't even imagine their wages going that low.

Dewey Brown: No. Ever since the young generation of people have been working in the mines, there's been pretty good wages because the union's been in here ever since '33, '32. And they growed up under the union and they had pretty good wages when they did go to work. But mine, some of mine I know come in the depression. I know I've got one daughter can remember. But my oldest son said he don't remember.

Interviewer: I guess that's something that only you can tell them about or people that lived through that.

Dewey Brown: Huh?

Interviewer: I guess that's something that only people that lived through it can tell them.

Dewey Brown: That's right. And then they don't believe you. But there's a lot of old men now that worked the same time I did, still living. A lot of them's dead too that worked at that time. A lot of them went through the same thing we did. We'd go on a strike and they'd just two or three weeks. The air was so bad in the mines that you could go to the man station, strike a match and it wouldn't burn. I know what come out 11 days straight on that. Before they ever got it

fixed up. And they had it down on the river or creek bed, didn't have no ventilation. And I've seen men working in there up to water up to their hips loading coal, reach down in that water to get it out. Seen one fellow in there working and they bought him a new pair of shoes. And rather than to put his new shows down in that water and put his shoes off and went barefooted in there.

Female: Guess he had a hard time getting them.

Dewey Brown: Had a hard time getting a pair of shoes. One time I seen them up there working that the mine was so crowded that they had six men working in one break through and they was carrying it out on their shoulders and putting it in the car. Didn't have no track in it. Carrying it out of the breakthrough and putting it in the car down on mainland.

Female: That's before the union.

Dewey Brown: Yeah. But I worked about, just about a year and a half before the union come up there. But I worked all over the Kentucky River, County Creek Coal Company, Parson's Camp, Amp Hill, Surgeon, Phil Corn Junior, Slim.

Interviewer: You're still a member of the union now?

Dewey Brown: Yeah. I guess I'll remain a member until I die.

Interviewer: Do you think the union's in good shape now?

Dewey Brown: Well, it's in good shape as far as the union is concerned. But the leadership in it in trouble. And then we got a whole of dissident miners that thinks they ought to have it all at once instead of letting it go along so they can take care of everybody. They want it all at one time. And then when they do that like _____ and then the government, seems to me that the government just wanted it tied up because the judges and everything is against it. Tony Boyle, now they got him sentenced to five years in the penitentiary. That's prison.

Interviewer: I read about that in the newspaper.

Dewey Brown: Fined him \$130,000.00.

Female: He's appealing it though.

Dewey Brown: He's appealing it, yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. I think that's on appeal. On appeal.

Dewey Brown: Vice president, he quit. Resigned.

Interviewer: They got – Mr. Panacovich is going to run for vice president.

Dewey Brown: Who?

Interviewer: Mr. Panacovich. He's from Pennsylvania there.

Dewey Brown: Well, he run on this dissident miner?

Interviewer: No. He's running as Boyle's vice presidential candidate.

Dewey Brown: Well, I know they got that Mueller and two or three more running on that miners for democracy. And the only thing they got mad about because they didn't give them all their pension money at one time. That's the only thing they got mad about. Couldn't have been mad about nothing else. And then they said Tony Boyle won the election illegal but he didn't. I never seen a thing illegal in it and I was at different places. I went to Pike and voted, had to go to Pike and vote. But they never – wasn't nobody in the room when I voted. Nobody else went in there except one at a time. And if they had anything illegal about it they fixed it up beforehand. They sure didn't have the ballot box stuffed because I was about the third man in there to vote and there wasn't nothing in it.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Dewey Brown: So I think it's just a scheme to take over the republican party and wants to take over the union.

Interviewer: The republican party you said?

Dewey Brown: The republican party has always been against labor. And the democrats had always been for labor. But they just want to take it over. Ever since the republicans have been in it's been going from bad to worse. I'm a democrat though. You know I'm democrat.

Interviewer: Yeah. I just turned 21. I think I'll start voting democrat too.

Dewey Brown: You better use it. You can vote at 18.

Interviewer: Oh yeah?

Dewey Brown: Yeah. You can register and vote now.

Interviewer: That's right. The law didn't come in time to help me though. Because it just changed when I turned 21 so there wasn't much.

Dewey Brown: Yeah. You ought to vote democrat.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Dewey Brown: Are your family republican?

Interviewer: No. They're democrat. Oh yeah. They're democrat.

Dewey Brown: Well, I used to be – I was raised a republican.

Interviewer: You were? I guess a lot of people changed in the '30s. Didn't they?

Dewey Brown: Well, I changed in '28.

Interviewer: In '28.

Dewey Brown: Yeah. Between Hoover. Hoover and Al Smith run together, against one another.

Interviewer: I think you were pretty – you saw ahead.

Dewey Brown: Yeah. Well, I voted for Al Smith. And I told old man John Thompson, he's an insurance salesman. I said if Hoover beats Al Smith I'll never vote another republican vote. And he beat him and I never voted another republican vote since. All my brothers is republican.

Interviewer: They still are?

Dewey Brown: I ain't got but two brothers living but they're both republican.

Interviewer: You want to tell me more about – you said that some guys did try to organize a union before '33, before the law was passed.

Dewey Brown: Yeah.

Interviewer: And helped you out. Do you want to tell me about the kind of troubles you ran into when you tried to organize the union then?

Dewey Brown: Well, they just – some companies just run them off. Wouldn't let them come in. Some, a few did come in. Some people signed up.

But there's so many of them that wouldn't sign up and have their vote and things like that to run them off the property that they didn't get enough of them signed up to make it stick. They had what they call coal and iron police.

Interviewer: What was that called?

Dewey Brown: The coal and iron police. And they just wouldn't let them come around. I know I – before I started to work at King's Creek me and my wife just been married and we went to Links. They was trying to organize at that time. And they cut us down and searched our suitcases.

Interviewer: That's hard to believe.

Dewey Brown: And they won't, wouldn't let you more than two get on a street corner, standing in a bunch. The police up there.

Interviewer: And they'd come break up the crowd. Right?

Dewey Brown: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: I've heard that. Well do you know if any mines around here went union? Did they make any headway in any of the mines?

Dewey Brown: Not in Lincoln County. No. I believe they did organize, try to organize down at the mouth of King's Creek there's a place _____. But they had a place called Barking and I think they got the union in there and I think they signed the contract.

Interviewer: Hurricane you said?

Dewey Brown: Barking.

Interviewer: How is that spelled?

Dewey Brown: Just like a dog would bark.

Interviewer: Oh yeah.

Dewey Brown: But that's called Barking. And they didn't – didn't nobody else sign up around about it in their _____ Creek and that down, none of them signed up until the climate went down. I guess they disbarred the one that signed up and hired somebody else in place.

Interviewer: Have you heard any stories about what went on over in Harlan County?

Dewey Brown: Well, I heared some stories but what is the truth I don't know. Had some had bad shooting at Black Mountain. They said they did. Killed 11 in one day over there. But now I never know that. I wasn't over there.

Interviewer: Were there ever any other unions besides the UNW come in here?

Dewey Brown: Yeah. They had Southern Union.

Interviewer: Southern Labor Union?

Dewey Brown: Yeah.

Interviewer: But that's recent. That's fairly just recently back here?

Dewey Brown: Yeah. Well, they came in about – oh about the time we left King's Creek, didn't they mama?

Female: We did something.

Dewey Brown: About '36 and they organized a local over on Quicksand. Wasn't Quicksand? Where Blue Diamond is?

Female: I don't remember.

Dewey Brown: Jewell Ridge. They organized Jewell Ridge and then Southern Labor Union had them below Lance, between Lance and Cumberland.

Interviewer: What about – have you ever heard of the Progressive Miners? Were they in here?

Dewey Brown: Well, I think they tried to get in here but they never did.

Interviewer: That's what I heard too. And the National Miner's Union. Did they ever come in here?

Dewey Brown: No.

Interviewer: They came in to through ____.

[Outside conversation]

Interviewer: Do you know anybody else who lives around here who worked as an organizer that might want to talk to me about this?

Dewey Brown: No. I tell you who could talk to you and tell you a whole lot about it is John Bates down at Witco.

Interviewer: Now where does he live?

Dewey Brown: Down to Witco. He lives out at Witco.

Female: Out on the where you go to the main road.

Dewey Brown: You go start like come down the new road. I believe it's the first house as you start up the hill, ain't it?

Female: I think he lives in a trailer down there. I believe. It might be a house. I don't know.

Dewey Brown: No. He got a house and a trailer. He got that trailer. He's very union. Local union 9664.

Female: Be on the right of the road.

Interviewer: His name is John Bates?

Dewey Brown: John Bates.

Interviewer: And is it on route 15 there?

Dewey Brown: Yeah. Down the new road. You go here.

Female: New service station down here where it hits the new road there.

Dewey Brown: Yeah. You have to go down across the railroad track and cross that bridge. You go on down below the housing project down there. Go across the railroad. And then go on out there and you cross the bridge and there's a store on this side, Jack Brader's and a restaurant, George, called George's...uh...something. We had a big church down there. But he lives on down below that.

Female: He lives _____.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Female: Show the bridge.

Interviewer: I'm just trying to think when you say the big road I'm trying to think 'cause –

Female: Well, they used to be down the road down this street, down towards Isom, down towards that way.

Interviewer: Oh yeah.

Dewey Brown: Well, this where you –

Female: It's an old road down to that bridge. He lives there. The reason I said that new road there is it comes out there in that corner.

Dewey Brown: See, that's called the Mountain Parkway.

Interviewer: Mountain Parkway.

Dewey Brown: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: That's what I want to get on.

Dewey Brown: Well, you go down the Mountain – go down this Mountain Parkway from right out here. It comes to that housing project near the top. When you go through there, cross the railroad, you're on the Mountain Parkway.

Female: It ain't but about half a mile down there is it.

Dewey Brown: No.

Female: No. Not even a mile. I would walk.

Interviewer: So I get on the parkway and I pass the railroad track.

Female: Just keep when you go down this way on the road. You don't have to turn off nowhere. Just stay on that main road.

Interviewer: So I go down this street here.

Dewey Brown: Are you going to walk down there?

Interviewer: And I go right over there. I go right.

Dewey Brown: Are you going to walk down there?

Interviewer: Well I have a car up there. I could come –

Dewey Brown: Well, you go out this way.

Female: Herbie would know where it's at.

Dewey Brown: Go around there and start back out of town like going towards Hazard. And then just go down there and after you cross the railroad and the bridge, that's biggest _____ just below Bobtown bridge warehouse. And anybody in there will tell you where John Bates lives.

Interviewer: Ok.

Dewey Brown: And Craig McCray he lives down there and he knows about this too.

Interviewer: Talk to them.

Dewey Brown: There's a lot of them down there knows about it.

Interviewer: You want to tell me more about what it was like with the roving pickets there?

Dewey Brown: Well, I never went with them too much. I was afraid of getting hurt. And I didn't want to hurt nobody.

Interviewer: Yeah. I guess that was pretty scary then in here.

Dewey Brown: Huh?

Interviewer: I guess that was pretty dangerous.

Dewey Brown: Well, we went enough of them together it wasn't much danger unless somebody shot in the crowd. Probably 500 about people. Nobody didn't know who nobody was. We did know who we were. We didn't know who nobody else were. When they was trying back in '59, Bill _____ scabbed and we was still union. That Baker, Louis Baker run the mine up there. I reckon they shot it all to pieces _____. I wasn't out in that.

[End of Audio]
